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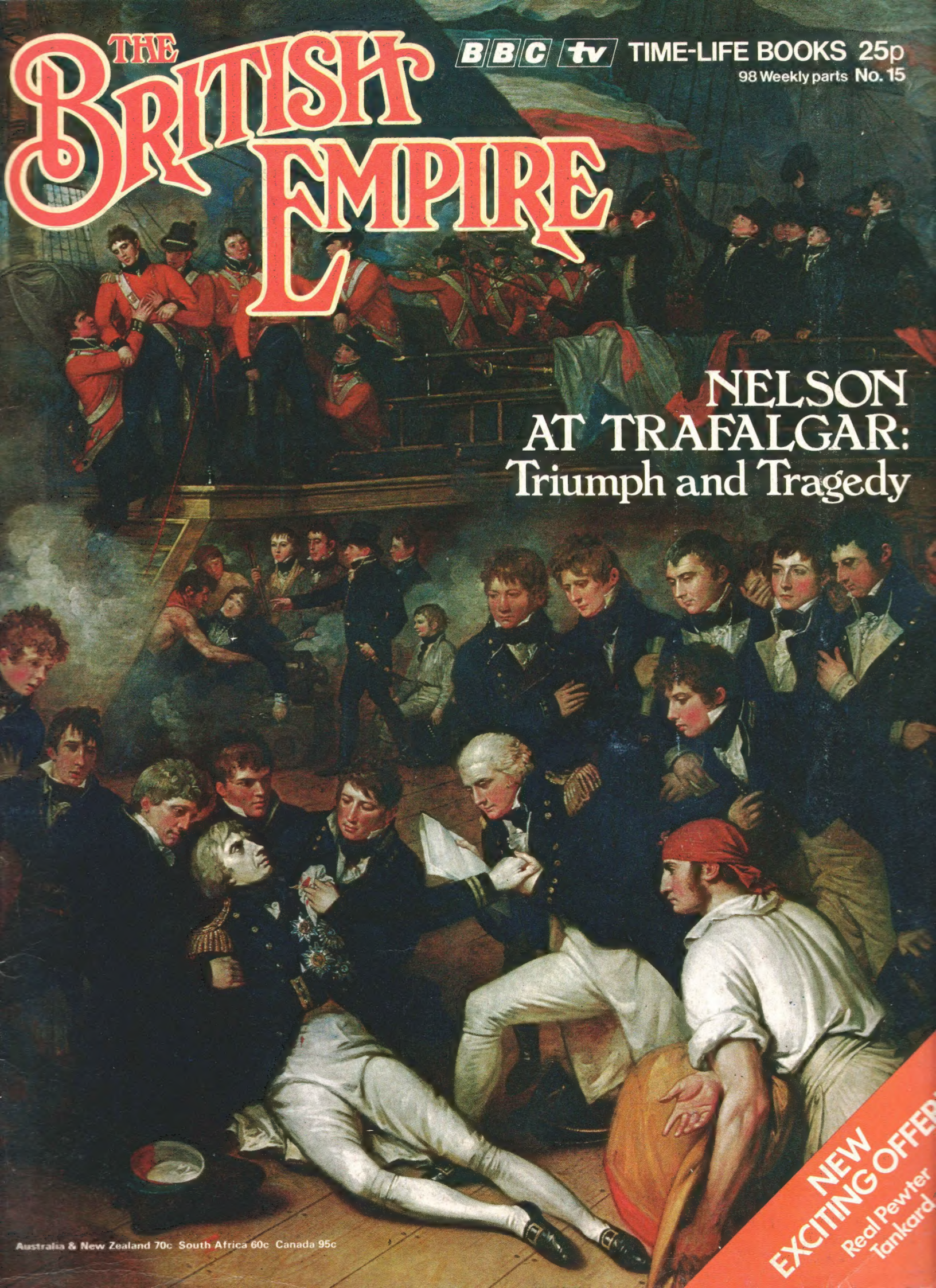

NELSON AT TRAFALGAR: Triumph and Tragedy

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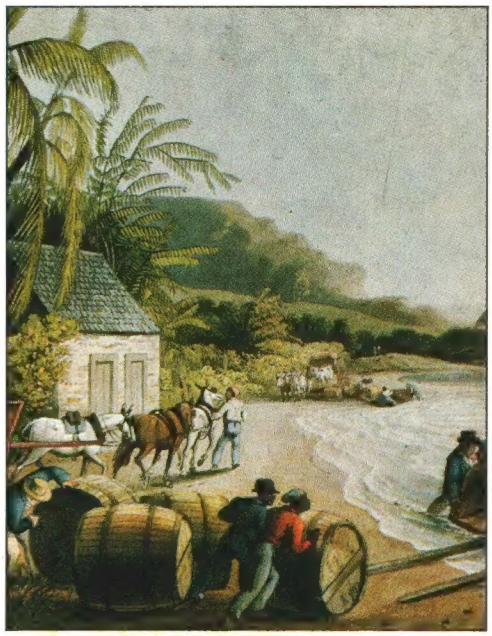

Issue No. 16: Pirates and Planters. For 150 years, the West Indian isles were bases for piracy, pawns in Europe's power struggles – and the source of fortunes won from the area's slave-based sugar plantations.

Issue No. 17. Revolt Against Slavery. Anti-slavery campaigners – both negro rebels and British humanitarians – fought for 60 years to free slaves throughout the Empire.

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Cover: A romanticized view of Nelson's death, done shortly after Trafalgar, reflects the adulation and reverence in which he was held by his countrymen.

How to Frame the Durbar Scroll

The Durbar Scroll included with this issue can be framed exactly as it comes to you. If you wish to simulate the original in its full length, cut the picture into two strips, using the black, bottom border of the upper strip as a guide line. For your convenience, the left edge of the lower strip slightly overlaps the right edge of the upper strip. Before you paste the two together, overlap the two until the picture is complete.

Save this with tokens from issues 16, 17 and 18 for this offer.

These tokens are valuable see inside back cover.

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GOBLETS TOKEN

NELSON AT TRAFALGAR: TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY

By David Howarth

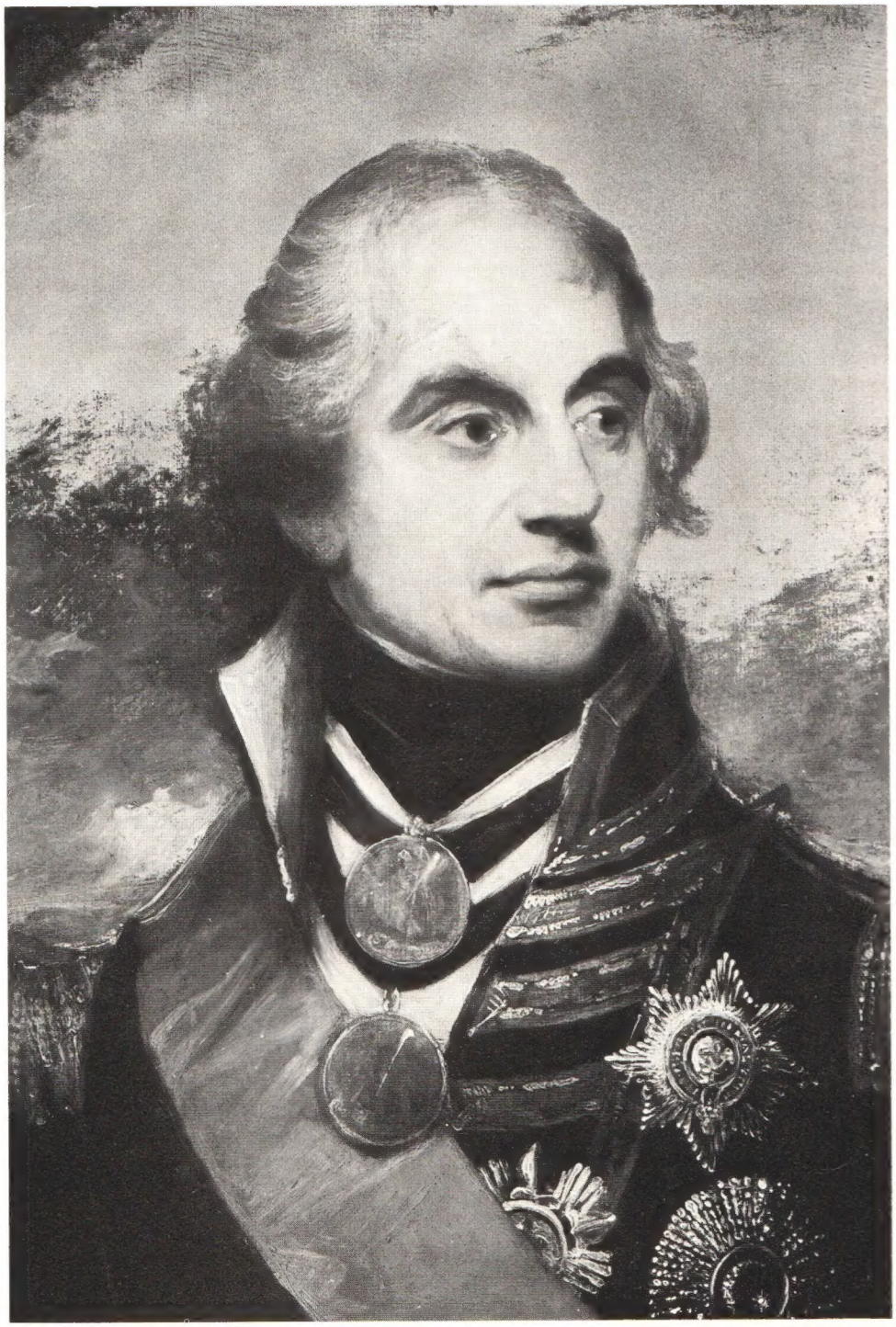
All through the summer of 1805, Napoleon's Army was waiting in Boulogne, with a fleet of boats in readiness to cross the Straits of Dover. In England, people prepared for the shock of invasion; nobody, a London newspaper said, could sleep in peace at night. Invasion had been expected, on and off, for seven years, and everyone knew why the blow had not yet fallen: the Royal Navy, so far, had commanded the Channel. In August, Napoleon wrote to his admirals: "Come into the Channel, bring our united fleet, and England is ours. If you are only here for 24 hours, all will be over, and six centuries of shame and insult will be avenged."

But his fleet could not come. It was lying in French and Spanish harbours in the Mediterranean and Atlantic, blockaded there by British ships which watched it summer and winter, night and day.

That showed the difference, in that period, between the French and British fleets: the French were on the defensive, unsure of themselves, the British were totally self-confident. And as years had passed, the difference had grown: French ships and crews were mouldering away for lack of sea experience, the British were perfecting their seamanship through the rigours of the constant blockade. By the end of that summer, they were the most efficient fleet the world had ever seen – and they knew they were. But all of them were heartily sick of the endless discomfort and boredom of keeping the sea: they longed to get it over in a final fight, which they knew they would win.

In the eyes of the British people, and of the Navy itself, there was one man who was the symbol of this skill and confidence, one man who led the defence of England. And when at last the chance of a battle seemed to be near, nobody had any doubt who should command it: Nelson.

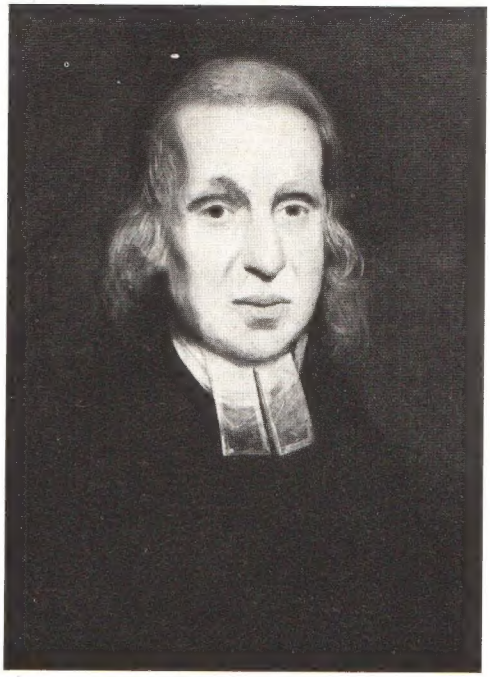
There was no one better able to destroy the French and Spanish fleets and establish the hegemony of Britain's Empire-binding navy. Nelson was a genius as a fighting Admiral: three major victories



At 42, Vice-Admiral Nelson was a romantic and heroic figure to the British public.

stood to his personal credit even before the final triumph of Trafalgar. But his greatest genius was in simpler things – in kindness and friendship. In his lifetime, he was hero-worshipped; but more than that, men in every walk of life felt an unique affection for him. Few great commanders have ever been so successful: certainly none had ever been so loved.

There was no sign of greatness in his ancestry, or in his early life. His father was Rector of Burnham Thorpe, which was then, and still is, a remote little village near the coast of Norfolk. His mother died when he was nine, leaving eight small children. Most of them had to go out to work as soon as they could, and Horatio, the fourth of them, decided to go to sea when he was 11. Luckily, he had an uncle, Maurice Suckling, who was a naval Captain; and to Chatham in 1771, lonely, homesick, small and physically weak, he made his way to join his uncle's ship as a servant.



Nelson's father, Edmund, was a parson, his mother, Catherine Suckling, a canon's daughter.

At Burnham Thorpe Rectory, Norfolk, Nelson lived with seven brothers and sisters until his mother's death forced the children into work – and Horatio, at the age of 11, to sea.

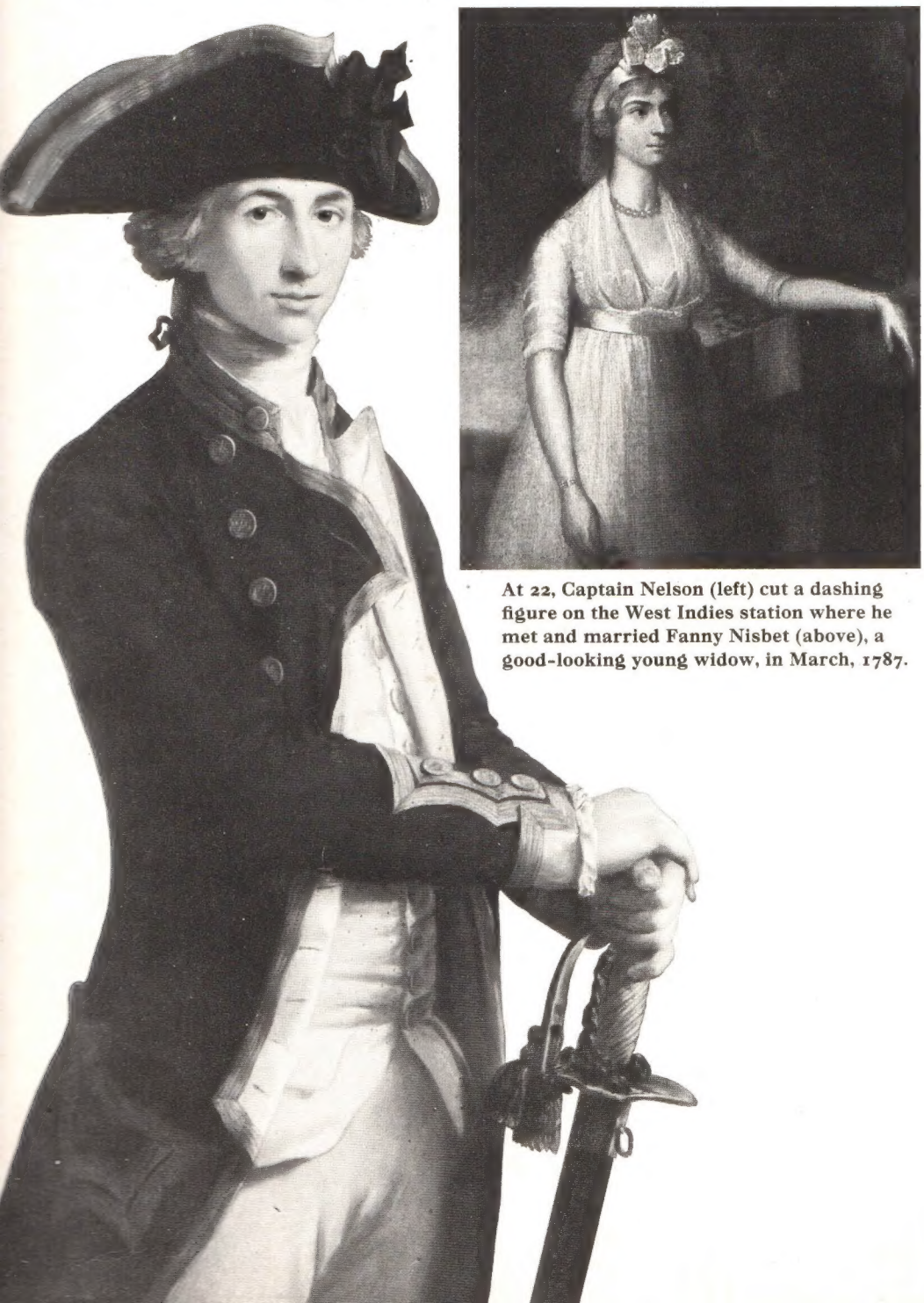
That was the usual way of becoming a naval officer in those days, and the usual age to do it. Some captains had a score of boys on their ship's books, and captains looked after them carefully and saw they were taught their profession. It was a life of almost incredible hardship for these children. They lived in the dark and damp of the cockpit, on or below the waterline, worked in the rigging, and mostly ate the same food as the seamen.

Under Captain Suckling's eye, Nelson learned to sail a ship's boat among the tides and mud-flats of the Thames and the Medway, and when he was 13 he was sent on a year's voyage to the Caribbean in a merchant ship. "If I did not improve my education," he wrote long afterwards, "I returned a practical seamen." At 15, as a midshipman, he volunteered for a naval expedition to the Arctic. It was on that voyage that he attacked a polar bear, a story made famous in a later painting. In fact, Nelson did not get as close to the bear as the painting suggests. In the original story told by the Captain, Nelson's gun misfired and he said spiritedly to his companion: "Do but let me get a blow at this devil with the butt-end of my musket, and we shall have him!" At that moment, however, one of the ship's guns was fired and the animal fled. It was, nevertheless, the first example of a physical courage which often went beyond the limits of common sense.

So far, this might have been the career of hundreds of boys of his generation – except that he was already conspicuous for making friends. Many much older men, his senior officers on these early voyages, remained his devoted friends for the rest of his life, or theirs. Also, they soon began to see his qualities as an officer. He was Acting Lieutenant at 17, and at 20 he was promoted captain, in command of a frigate of 32 guns and a crew of about 200.

That was in the West Indies again, in the last stages of the American War of Independence, when Britain was fighting not only the colonists but also France and Spain. Nelson was tremendously active at sea in that period, mostly on independent voyages which took him up to Boston and New York and down to the coast of South America. But his most notable exploit was not at sea at all: it was an expedition up the River San Juan in Nicaragua. All his life, he liked what

The 15-year-old Nelson's attack on a polar bear amply demonstrated his scorn of danger.



At 22, Captain Nelson (left) cut a dashing figure on the West Indies station where he met and married Fanny Nisbet (above), a good-looking young widow, in March, 1787.

would now be called "amphibious operations," when he led his sailors in attacks on shore – and so gained the nickname in the Navy of "the Brigadier."

There then followed two more commissions in the Indies. The first ended pleasantly: his whole ship's company offered to serve under him again – a most unusual tribute to his powers of leadership. But in the second, the war had come to an end, and peacetime service did not suit him well. He grew bored with social occasions – and there were plenty of them there, because Prince William, the future King William IV, was a naval Captain on the station. And Nelson made himself unpopular among civilians through being too conscientious. By winning their independence, Americans had become foreigners, and by law foreigners could not trade in British possessions. The local people wanted the trade, and the governors and custom officials were willing to shut their eyes to it. But not Nelson.

However, in that unhappy commission he did achieve something: when he was 27, he married. His bride was a widow, Fanny Nisbet, a little older than himself; and for a while he often wrote in his letters home about the pleasure of married life. Yet his letters to her, before and after they married, spoke of respect and affection more than of love – they were totally different from the passionate letters he wrote to Emma Hamilton when he was older. Perhaps it was the idea of being married, rather than Fanny herself, which attracted him.

For the next five years he was at home, without a naval appointment – the only long period in his life when he lived the life of a minor country squire. It was pleasant enough, but it bored him, and he was always asking the Admiralty for another ship. He did not get one until 1793, when he was 34; but then it was a ship worth waiting for, the *Agamemnon*, 64 guns, which always remained his favourite of the ships he had commanded. A month after his appointment, war with France was declared again. And now began 12 years of constant action, and growing success and fame.

This appointment to a line-of-battle ship gave him the chance, which he had never had before, to take part in fleet actions, and it was this that brought out

his particular genius. He had a kind of brilliance that shone at its best when he was in high command. In tactical skill he showed an instinct – sometimes a better instinct than his admirals – for doing just the right thing at just the right moment, often in a very unorthodox way. In daring, he set an example seamen were happy to follow: he really loved the excitement of danger, and was always ready to die. And in friendship, he never lost his irresistible warmth: however busy he was, and however weighed down by responsibility or ill-health, he always found time and energy to write to old friends and make new ones, to show his sympathy and appreciation, and to take enormous pains to help anyone in distress.

In some men, especially in commanders, kindness may be taken for weakness, but in Nelson it never was. He expected instant obedience from men he commanded, and he got it – not because they feared him, but simply because he awoke their pride and love. So, when he had his chance, he shot up the ladder of honour and promotion: at 37, he was still a Captain, as he had been since he was 20 – but only three years later, at 40, he was Vice-Admiral, knight and peer.

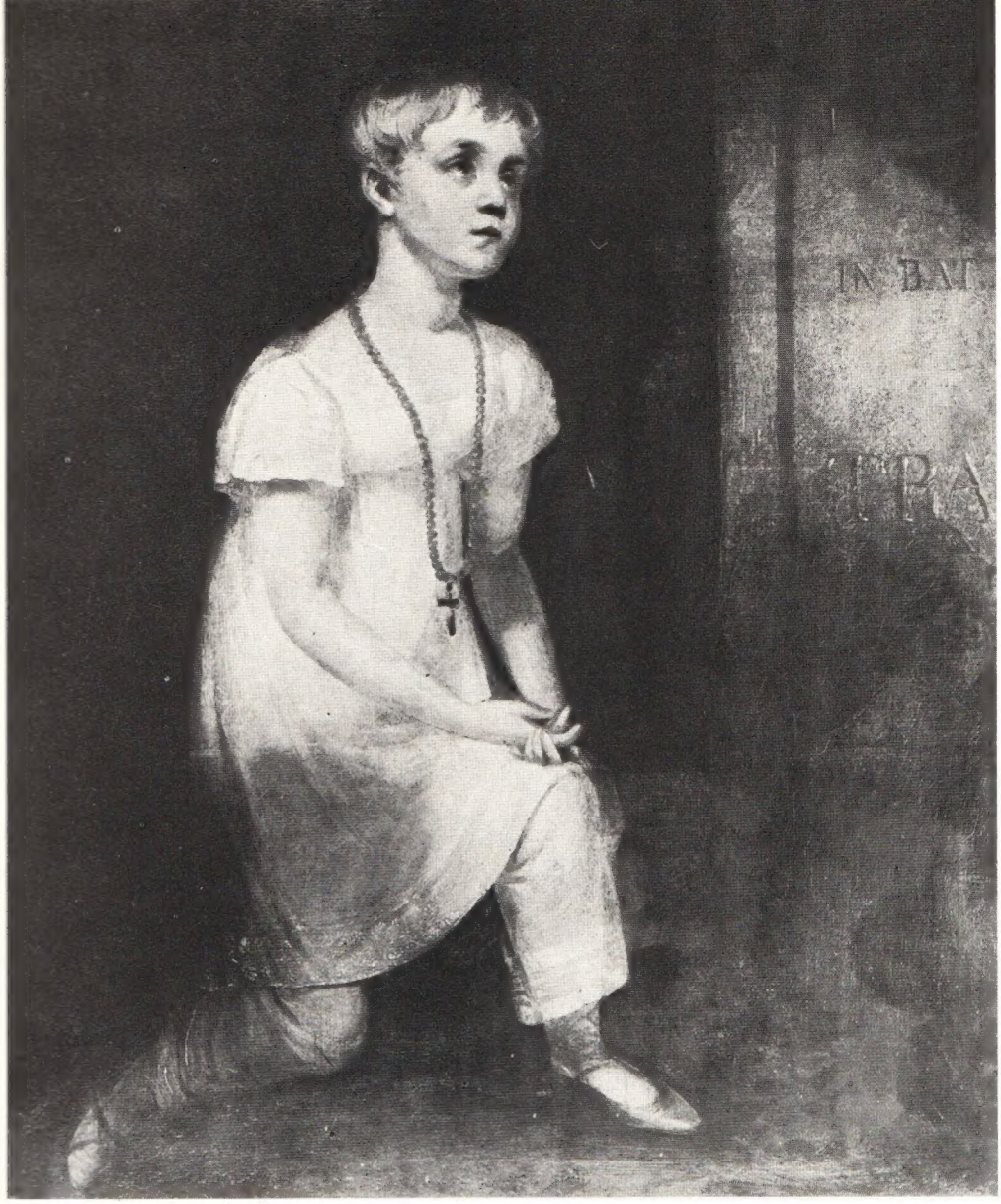
As Captain of the *Agamemnon*, Nelson served three energetic years in the Mediterranean. In the course of them, he was blinded in one eye during fighting ashore at the siege of Calvi in Corsica. By the end of them, the ship was worn out, and he was promoted Commodore of the *Captain*, 74 guns. And it was in the *Captain*, off Cape St. Vincent in Spain in 1797, that he made the first of his lasting claims to fame. The British fleet under Sir John Jervis sighted a Spanish fleet of superior numbers. Jervis led the fleet, in line ahead, through a gap in the Spanish line, intending to divide the enemy fleet into separate parts. Nelson, near the rear of the line, saw that the gap was going to close before Jervis could manœuvre the whole of the fleet; and he left his place in the line and sailed into the gap alone.

This was an act in itself that amazed all naval officers of the time. To leave the line of battle was unheard of, and looked like cowardice: Nelson was risking court martial and the end of his career. As it was, he fought seven of the Spanish ships singled-handed before any help could reach him. When the *Captain* had lost her sails and rigging he gave the order to board the nearest enemy. Then – again a most unorthodox act for a commodore – he led the boarding-party himself; he forced that ship to surrender, then jumped aboard another which was close on the other side of it, and captured them both. Jervis gave credit where it was due, and Nelson was knighted. What was more, he became a legend from this moment in the Navy itself.

He came through that battle with nothing worse than bruises, but a little later he lost his right arm in an unsuccessful attack on Tenerife – again because he would not keep out of danger. He came home to recover, but was soon in the Mediterranean again, searching for the French fleet which – though he did not know it – was taking Napoleon and his Army to capture Egypt. He found the French lying at anchor in a shallow bay off the mouth of the Nile. Night was coming on, and it was a position most admirals might have thought impregnable. But Nelson sailed straight in, and by morning 13 of the 17 French ships were sunk or burned or captured. Of all sea battles, this was a masterpiece.

It was at that moment of fame and glory that Nelson fell in love. Emma Hamilton was the wife of the British representative at the Court of Naples, where Nelson took his fleet for repair. She was beautiful and born in poverty; and in that era, it was almost inevitable that she should become the mistress of a series of rich young men. Hamilton had acquired her from his nephew in settlement of some debts, and he lived with her for seven years before he married her. Now he was 67, and wanting a quiet life; she was 32, gay, experienced, charm-

Emma Hamilton, seen here in her late teens, was still a spectacular beauty at 33 when she became Nelson's mistress. The wife of the kindly, elderly Sir William Hamilton, British Minister in Naples, she had a dark past: at 15, she posed scantily clad in a London "Temple of Health," soon after bore an illegitimate child, and was later kept by a baronet.



Horatia, Nelson's illegitimate daughter by Emma Hamilton, was the apple of her father's eye. She was born in the Hamilton house – but the long-suffering Sir William, proud to have Nelson as an intimate friend, turned a blind eye to his affair with Emma.

ing and ambitious; and Nelson was 40, wounded and a national hero.

Some of Nelson's friends were afraid he was making a fool of himself, and that she would distract him from his duty. At first she did. In Naples, he seemed to lose his touch in naval affairs. And when he and the Hamiltons returned together to England Nelson rejected his wife, which was the only notable act of unkindness in his life. But he did not deceive Hamilton, who knew quite well what was happening and always regarded Nelson as his best and most admirable friend. Nelson's marriage had been childless, and so had Hamilton's; but in 1801, Emma gave birth to a daughter who was named Horatia. For the rest of his life, Nelson was a man whose love was divided: on one side, his passionate love of Emma, and on the other his love of duty, fame and honours, and of the men he served with in the Navy.

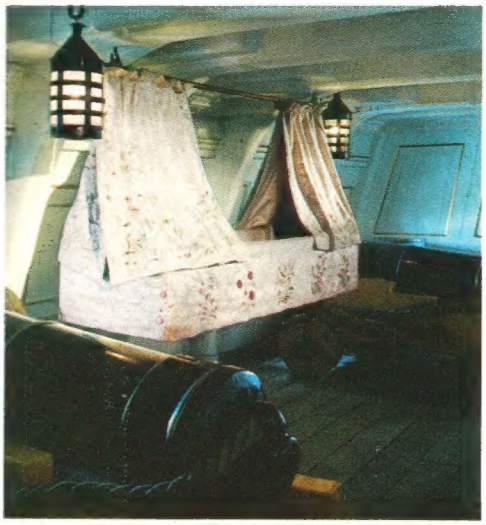
But the Navy always came first. Before he could settle in England, he was called to sea again, this time to the Baltic, where the blockade of Napoleon's Empire demanded the destruction of a Danish fleet. Nelson was only second in command. His Admiral, Sir Hyde Parker, lacked determination; and it was at the height of this battle that Nelson refused to see the Admiral's signal to withdraw, and made a joke of it by putting his telescope to his blind eye.

In 1803, it was the Mediterranean again, and the blockade of the French fleet in Toulon. Nelson now was Commander-in-Chief, and his flagship was the *Victory*. He longed to tempt the French out of harbour and finish the boring blockade in a final fight, and then to home; and so did every officer and man in the fleet whose letters have been preserved. But on March 30, 1805, the long blockade ended: Admiral Pierre Villeneuve slipped out of Toulon, eluded Nelson and sailed his squadron to the West Indies. It was not until May that Nelson, having made a fruitless search in the Mediterranean, turned and chased the French across the Atlantic. Once again Villeneuve escaped, turned east, and in August reached safety in Cadiz.

To keep the French bottled up there 30 British ships of the line assembled off Cadiz; their crews and captains too were weary of the sea and morale was low. The *Victory* had been called back to Portsmouth, and Nelson spent a last pleasantly domestic three weeks with Emma and Horatia. On September 28, 1805, the *Victory* was sighted approaching the fleet from the west. "Lord Nelson is arrived," a delighted Captain wrote. "A sort of general joy has been the consequence."

Already a hero maimed by the loss of an arm and an eye, Nelson at Naples won the Dukedom of Brontë in Sicily – as his signature shows – for helping the King of Naples suppress a rebellion.

Nelson Bronte



The commander's cot was always individually made to double as his coffin if he died and was buried at sea. Nelson's body, however, was brought back to England for burial.

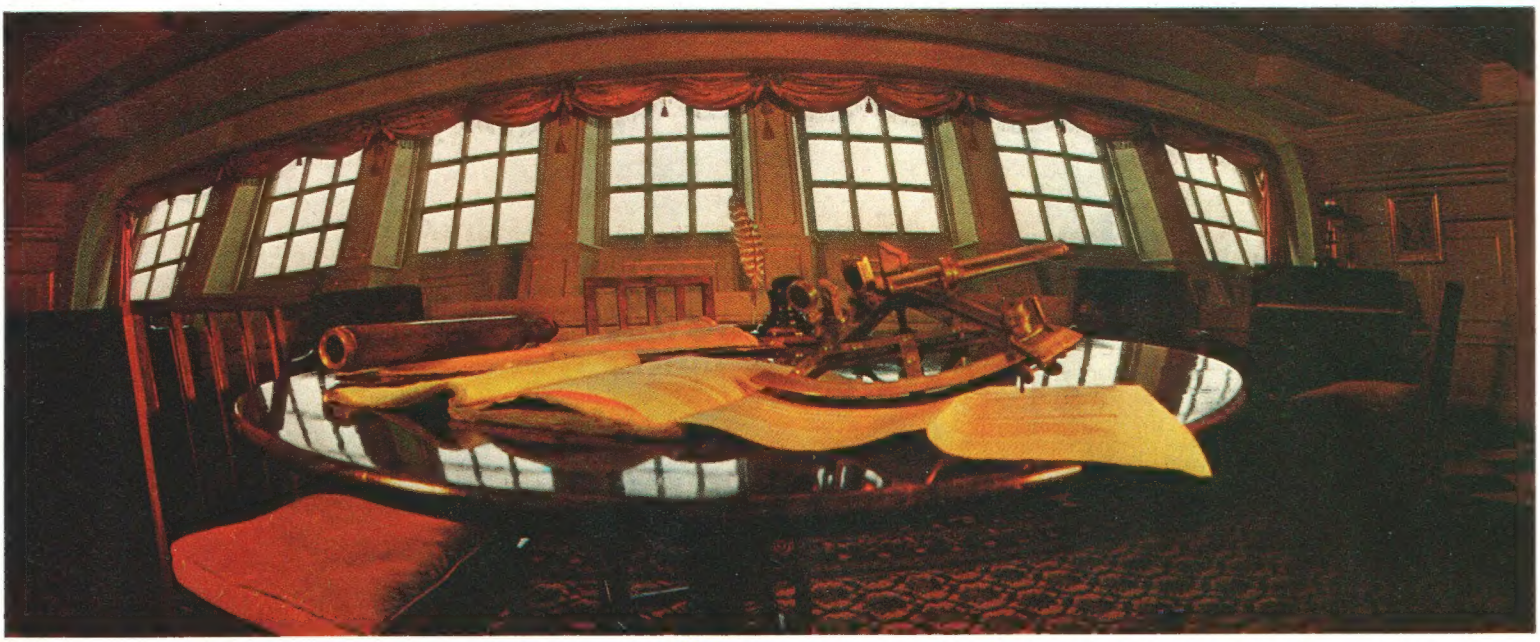
II. H.M.S. Victory's Self-Contained World

The *Victory* was an old ship in 1805. Her keel had been laid at Chatham in 1759, the year Nelson was born, and she was launched in 1765. She was afloat for over 150 years: now, carefully preserved as a national monument in Portsmouth, the harbour from which she sailed for her greatest battle. This superb example of 18th-Century design still evokes the atmosphere of Nelson's navy and of the life of the officers and men who sailed with him.

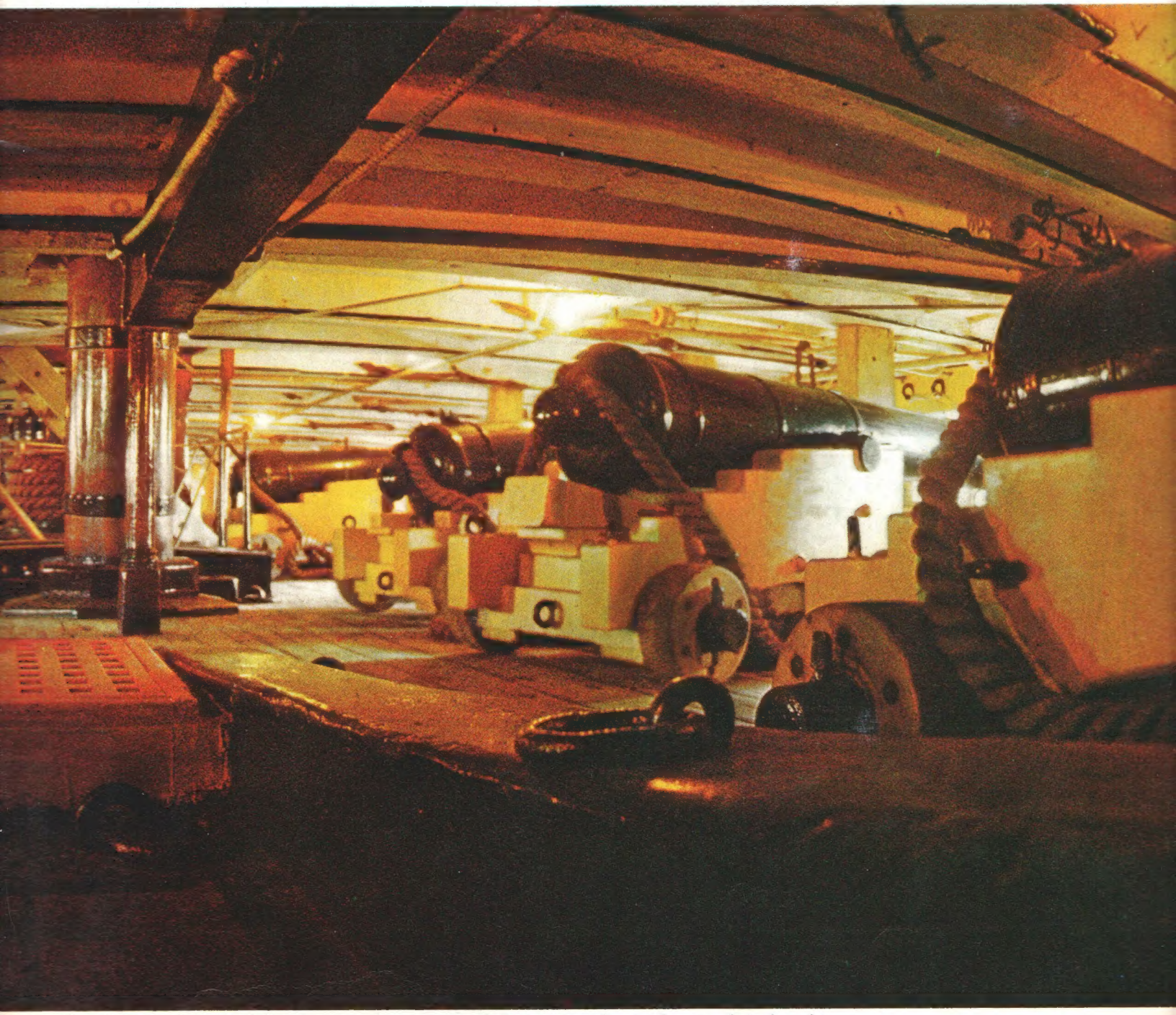
Ever since Viking times, an officer's place in a ship of war had been in the stern, and in the ornate and elegant stern of the *Victory* are the officers' cabins. The Captain's opens on to the quarter-deck, close to the wheel and binnacle; the Admiral's is below it, on the upper gun-deck. Both are furnished and decorated with the impeccable taste of the age – in contrast to the utilitarian fittings of the gun-decks, where the crew of 820 men not only worked, but slept and ate, and enjoyed what little recreation they could find in these crowded spaces.

The *Victory* has three gun-decks, with the quarter-deck and poop above them, and the orlop-deck and hold below them. The lower gun-deck carries the heaviest guns, the 32-pounders, with 24-pounders on the middle deck and the lightest guns, the 12-pounders, on the upper deck.

The lower gun-deck carries 30 32-pounder guns, 15 on each side. The heavy ropes stopped the rolling cannon as



Around this gleaming table in the *Victory*'s elegant day cabin, Nelson gathered his devoted captains before battle to brief them on his plans.



hey recoiled violently after each firing. A 15-man crew was needed to serve each pair of port and starboard guns.

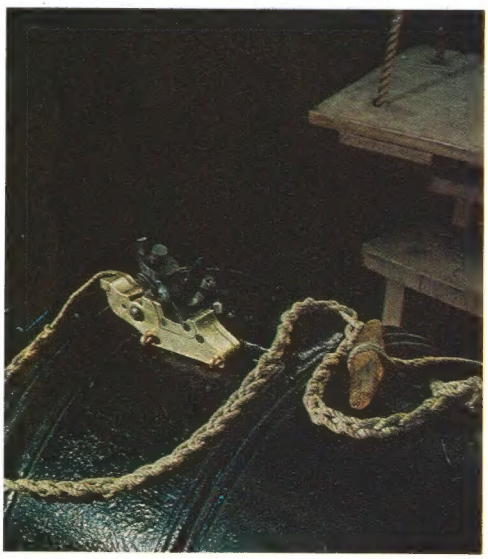
Although hundreds of men had to live on these decks – mostly the lower deck – they were designed first and foremost for fighting. Six minutes was the time allowed to clear a ship for action – to open the gunports, bring shot from the lockers and powder from the magazines, load the guns and run them out ready to fire; and also to hoist the mess-tables up to the beams above, stow any hammocks that might be in use, and get rid of all personal possessions. The officers' cabins were also part of the fighting-decks; the partitions were all removable, and for battle the furniture was stowed in the hold or in the ship's boats, or sometimes hoisted in the rigging. So life had to be spartan.

The *Victory*'s gun-decks are now restored to the condition they were normally in during Nelson's life – clean, scrubbed, polished, with everything stowed in its proper place and ready: the guns themselves; the wooden rammers, spongers, tackles, and flintlocks; the slow-matches that were used to fire the guns if the flintlocks failed; the chain, bar and elongating shot; carriers for red-hot shot (never used in close combat, when fire on an enemy's ship might spread to one's own). Flexible rope rammers were often used when ships fell aboard their enemies and fought with their sides grinding together, leaving no room to use the normal rigid rammers, which were so long they had to be pushed out of the gunports before they could be inserted in the barrels of the cannon.

Anyone who visits the *Victory* now must feel in awe of the forgotten art that could build such a ship out of wood – of the prodigious amount of English oak that had to be felled to build her, transported, sawn and hewn and fitted together by hand. Her sides are two feet thick and almost solid, her keel is 152 feet long and 20 inches square, and her mainmast rises over 200 feet above the waterline. Looking at her, one can understand why monarchs all through British history worried about the cultivation of oaks, a crop that takes a century to grow; and why Admiral Collingwood, Nelson's second in command at Trafalgar, always carried a pocketful of acorns when he

continued on p. 402

Gun-decks were festooned with gear: shot was stacked on the deck and flexible rammers snaked down from deckheads where the gunners' tools were racked in neat rows.



The flintlock mechanism (above) enabled British tars to fire their guns more rapidly than could their French opponents, who still used the less reliable slow-match.

Elongating shot, which almost doubled its effective length in flight, was sometimes used by Nelson's Navy to shred a Frenchman's rigging and bring down his masts.

Chain-shot (below) and bar-shot (right) were two more missiles that warships hurled at each other's vital maze of rigging.

Above each gun hung a worm to remove smouldering bits before reloading, a rammer, and a sponger to swab out the bore.

Mess-tables, normally slung between the guns, were hauled up and securely lashed out of the way at the first hint of action.

On shot-carriers like this, glowing cannonballs used to set enemy vessels on fire were delivered to the guns from the small, nearby heating furnaces.

The tars' hammocks were slung so close together that in the gun-deck's foul air disease could speedily riddle the crew.

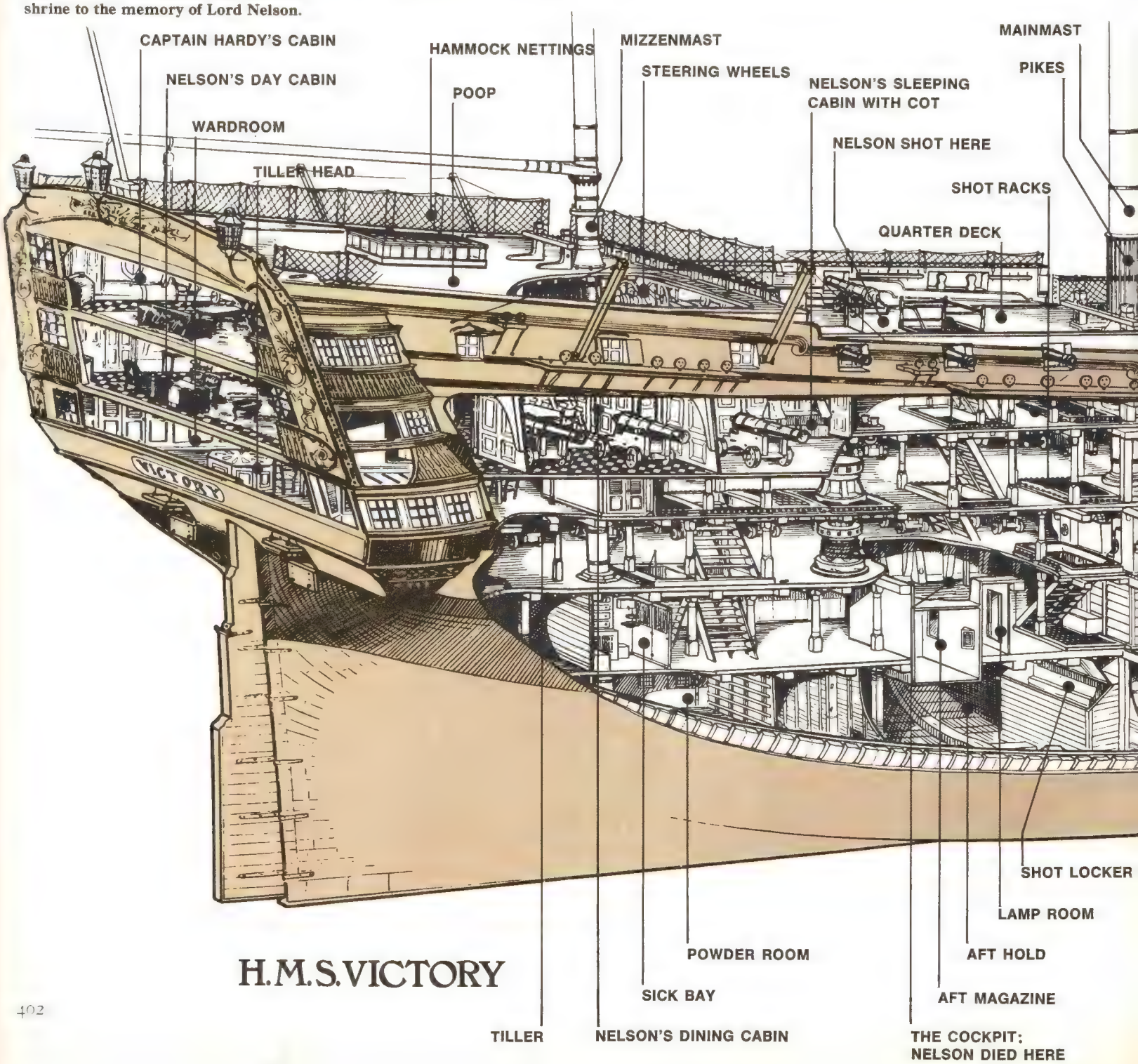
The *Victory*, preserved in a permanent dry-dock at Portsmouth, has become a shrine to the memory of Lord Nelson.

went for walks in the country at home.

Also, one is in awe of that other forgotten art – the art of the men who sailed her. They were familiar with hundreds of now obscure technical terms, some of which appear on the cutaway diagram of *Victory*'s hull below: carronades, the murderous, snub-nosed cannon in the bows – originally made at Carron in Stirlingshire – which fired a 68-pound ball and a mass of shot; hammock nettings, where the hammocks were stacked before battle as a protection against fire and flying splinters; the manger, which, through intended to hold chickens and goats, trapped any water that splashed aboard with the anchor cable.

But the technicalities of the ship's interior were nothing in comparison to the enormous complexity of the rigging. And to keep her at sea, every man on deck had to know every rope, and be able to find it in pitch darkness, and in driving spray and rain. To make or shorten the sail, he had to be able to work aloft, and on the yard-arms, day or night, whatever weather came. And her officers, especially her captain and master, had to know the "feel" of her – what she would do in any conditions of sea and tide and wind.

But this they did, four hours on watch and four below, for month after month. They gave the ships of Nelson's Navy an independence that vanished with the



H.M.S. VICTORY

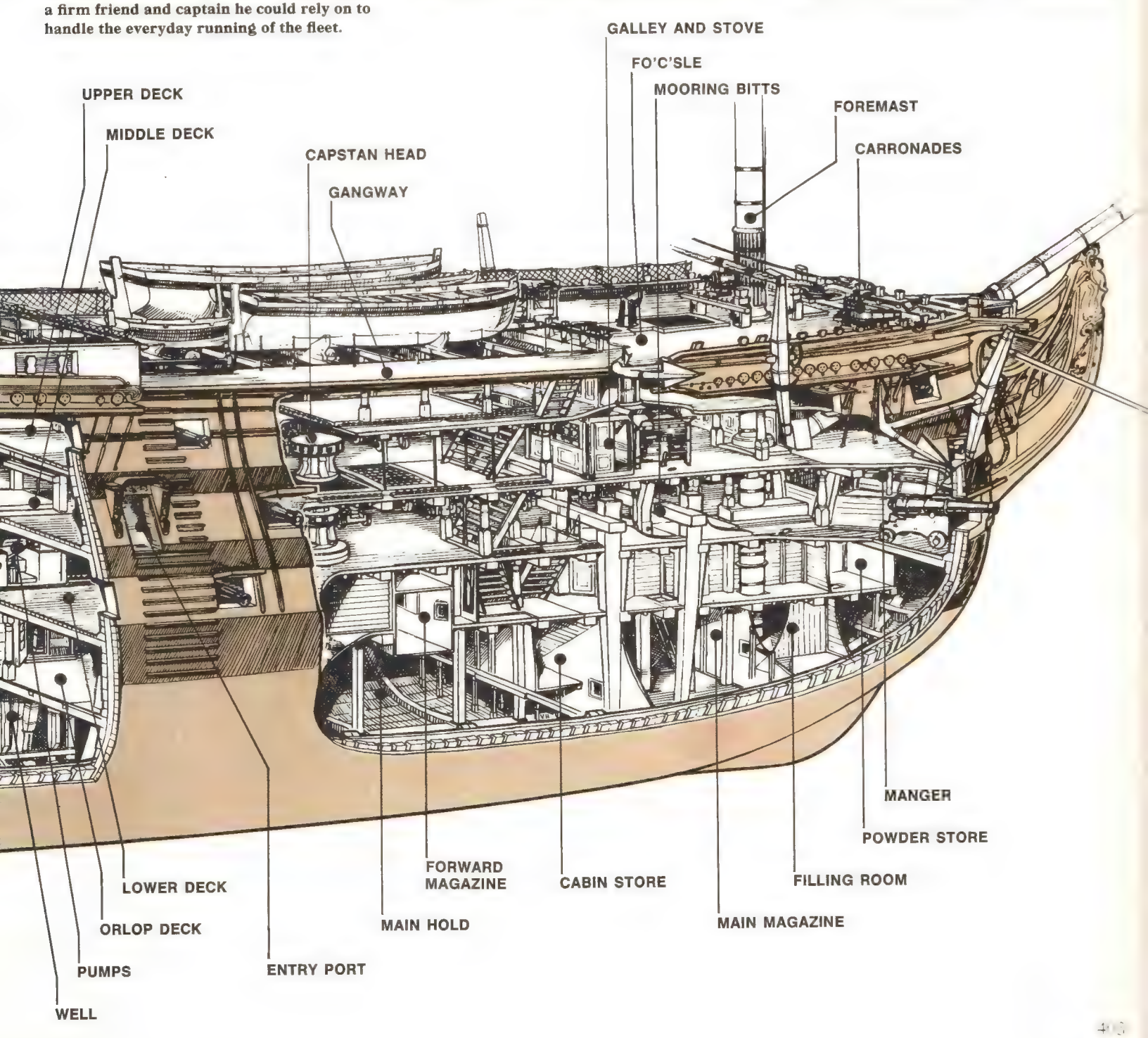
In Thomas Masterman Hardy, Nelson found a firm friend and captain he could rely on to handle the everyday running of the fleet.

coming of steam; for steamships needed fuel, but sailing-ships needed nothing but the wind – and, once every few months, a supply ship or boats in the roadstead of a port, to give them provisions and water. A ship like the *Victory* was self-sufficient, a world of her own; her own carpenters, sail-makers and riggers kept her in repair, and she could stay at sea for years without entering harbour. Nelson, in two years before the battle of Trafalgar, never set foot off her decks, nor did most of his crew; and Collingwood once was 22 months at sea without ever dropping anchor.

So, for the men who manned her, this ship became home, the only home they had; and the 20 inches of space that was allotted for his hammock was all that any man could call his own.

A sailor's life was comfortless and boring; and both the discomfort and boredom were due to the size of the crews that had to be crammed in the ships. The *Victory* carried over 800 men, but a tenth of that number could have sailed her. The rest were only really needed in battle – to serve the guns, to board the enemy or repel his boarders, to repair the damage and attend the wounded.

But battles were rare. Between them the men had nothing useful to do; and yet they were kept incessantly busy with work, like "holystoning" – scouring the



In one of his studies of seamen done around 1800, Thomas Rowlandson shows the captain with a speaking-tube for hailing men aloft.

The purser generally ran ships' accounts with a meanness that amply justified his usual Naval nickname of "Old Nipcheese."

The ship's carpenter, here holding an adze, saw and dividers, was responsible for keeping a vessel seaworthy under all conditions.

deck with sandstone on hands and knees, in a position reminiscent of praying – which was only invented to occupy their hands. Their only lawful pleasure was the rum ration, and nothing was done to occupy their minds. Some of them were volunteers, but more than half had either been forced on board by press-gangs, or else were thieves and vagabonds sent to the Navy's ships instead of prison in a doubtful act of mercy. Most of them were young: the average age of the *Victory*'s crew was 22, and the youngest seaman on board was said to be 10.

In a tough life, discipline and punishments had to be tougher still – the hangings from the yard-arm and the ceremonial floggings – and petty officers often lashed out with a rope's end to make men move quickly. For fear of desertion, shore-leave was very seldom granted; instead, cargoes of prostitutes were brought on board in port. Once men were aboard, they could not expect to set foot on land again until the ship was in need of a major refit, which might be in two years or ten. Meanwhile, especially on foreign stations, they had no privacy whatever, nor any contact with the world outside. News only reached them in the form of rumours long out of date. Letters took so long to reach them that most of the seamen gave up trying to keep in touch with their families.

As a result, few sailors wrote anything of their life in the Navy. Something like 40,000 men must have been at sea at this period of the war with France, but insights into the day-to-day existence of the sailors are a rarity. The most evocative glimpse of it was given by a boy named Bernard Coleridge, who was just 11 when he wrote this letter to his father and mother: "Indeed we live on beef which has been ten or eleven years in corn and on biscuit which quite makes your throat cold in eating it owing to the maggots which are very cold when you eat them, like calves-foot jelly or blomonge being very fat indeed. . . . We drink water of the colour of the bark of a pear-tree with plenty of little maggots and weevils in it and wine which is exactly like bullock's blood and sawdust mixed together. I hope I shall not learn to swear, and by God's assistance I hope I shall not." Bernard Coleridge was killed when he was 14: he fell out of the rigging.

The captains ruled their crews with autocratic powers. Some captains – probably most – used their powers wisely, and won their crews' respect. But some were cruel by nature, or else were afraid of the mob of men they had to keep under control: a long voyage gave plenty of scope to a tyrant, and his crew had no defence against him. So there were happy ships, and ships where life was hell.

But good or bad, the captains were quite different from their crews. Most of them were much older, men on either side of 40. All of them had been in the Navy since they were boys. And the greatest difference was that they were gentry. That social distinction may seem unimportant now, but it was the backbone of the Navy and Army of Georgian England. Most naval officers were the sons of country squires, born to assume authority. And far from resenting the privilege of birth, sailors respected it, and felt they had a right to be commanded by gentlemen. In one frigate, a year before Trafalgar, the crew protested to the Commander-in-Chief against the treatment they had from their Captain, and one of their bitterest complaints was that he was only the son of a barber.

And yet, in spite of everything, a mass of unwilling, uneducated men became the proudest, most efficient navy that had ever been organized.

To understand that amazing achievement, the sailor's life must not be judged in modern terms. In the 18th Century, life afloat was hard, but so was life ashore. The elegance of Georgian England was

The ship's cook was normally a maimed seaman. He had to whistle while he worked to prove he was not eating the food.

Sailors were rarely the jolly tars Rowlandson suggests in this drawing. Ferocious punishment and unspeakable food usually made them sullen and potentially mutinous.

Midshipmen, the most junior of a ship's officers and occasionally no older than ten, could have grown sailors whipped.

founded on brutal poverty; Nelson himself, coming back from the sea, was greatly distressed at the hardships of farmworkers near his home in Norfolk. At sea, the food might be rotten, but there was enough: the officers might be martinets, but so might officials ashore; the rules might be strict, but they were simple and if you stuck to them you could usually keep out of trouble. As for the punishments, everybody could see the need for them; nobody wanted to be shipmates with a thief, or a lookout who fell asleep, a habitual fighter, or a man who was often too drunk to pull his weight. And above all, at sea there was companionship. It was a man's world, and more than that, a sailor's world; the first thing a new man was made to believe was that a sailor was a cut above any landlubber.

Hardly anything is known about these sailors as individuals, simply because they so rarely wrote letters. But their opinions came to light in two mutinies at Spithead and The Nore in 1797. The mutineers' spokesmen did not object at all to the strictness of naval justice; they only protested against injustice. They were ready and willing to serve under any officer who knew his job and treated them fairly according to the rules that the men lived by.

Those mutinies did not win for the seamen everything they wanted, but they probably did some good. By the time of Trafalgar, eight years afterwards, the whole atmosphere of naval life was beginning to change. The Admiralty was setting new limits to the captains' powers; in 1806, flogging of more than 12 lashes was not allowed without a court martial. And admirals and captains at sea had become more concerned for the welfare of their crews. None of the senior officers afloat would have tolerated the harsh oppression of an earlier generation.

It is impossible to say how much of this change was due to Nelson. But he certainly set an example that every naval officer must have observed. He was the most successful captain and admiral: he was also by nature a kind and compassionate man. In his ships, kindness and success could be seen to go together; for kindness was something that sailors had never been used to, and a little of it instantly won their heartfelt loyalty and aroused their hidden natural pride.

III. The Clash of Fleets

At dawn on October 21, 1805, off Cape Trafalgar in the south of Spain, Napoleon's French and Spanish fleet was sighted, ten miles away against the eastern sky. Men in the British fleet rushed up on deck to look; it was a sight they had longed to see for the past two years. The two fleets prepared themselves for the great battle to come.

As soon as it was light enough for flags to be seen, Nelson in the *Victory*, signalled his fleet to follow the course set by him. The *Victory* swung slowly into the path of the rising sun, and one by one the other 25 ships of the line did the same. The breeze from the west-north-west was hardly enough to do any more than ruffle the water, but a heavy swell was coming from the ocean.

This was the end of 48 hours of intense anxiety. When the French and Spanish started to leave the harbour of Cadiz, Nelson had no means of knowing whether they meant to head north for the English Channel, or south for the Straits of Gibraltar. But his frigates under Captain Blackwood had successfully followed and watched them, and signalled every move that the enemy made throughout those days and nights. Blackwood's tenacity and Nelson's anticipation had brought the fleets together.

All Nelson's captains knew exactly what they had to do. When he took command of the fleet, all of them were invited to dine with him on the *Victory*, and he had explained a revolutionary tactical plan. In almost every battle in the past, fleets had manœuvred into parallel lines; when the lines were in range, each ship had fought a duel of gunnery with its nearest opponent. But no day would be long enough, Nelson had said, to make this classic movement with the large fleet he had; he proposed to deploy his fleet in two lines. He would lead the first, and cut through the enemy's line about the middle; the other, led by Admiral Collingwood, would cut it near the rear. Both lines would win a victory, he expected, before the enemy's van could make a ponderous and complicated turn in formation and join the battle.

"Something must be left to chance," he wrote to the captains, "nothing is sure in a Sea Fight beyond all others. Shot will carry away the masts and yards of friends as well as foes. But I look with confidence to a Victory before the Van of the Enemy could succour their Rear. . . . No Captain can do very wrong if he places his Ship alongside that of an Enemy."

The danger of this plan was that the leading ships, especially the *Victory* and Collingwood's flagship the *Royal Sovereign*, would be under fire from many enemy ships before they could reply; for ships could only fire broadside, and had no guns, or few, ahead or astern. But the novelty of it, and Nelson's exposition, made every captain confident; and their enthusiasm spread through the whole of the fleet. No man can go into battle without some fear for his own safety; but as the slow approach to battle began, on that autumn morning, every man was certain that whether he lived or died, the fleet under Nelson would win.

But in the French and Spanish fleets, the captains were almost certain they would lose. They outnumbered the British, but they knew they were no match for them. Some of their ships were magnificent, but most of their crews were deplorable. The French were demoralized by the long blockade, and had 1,700 men on the sick-list; the Spaniards had manned their ships from the Army and the beggars and convicts of Cadiz; thousands had never been to sea before and were miserably sea-sick. Few of the gunners had ever fired a gun from a rolling ship – a much more difficult problem than firing one on shore. The Spanish resented being placed under French command, and many of the captains mistrusted their Admiral, Pierre Villeneuve.

Beset by so many misfortunes, these sailors deserve the sympathy of historians. They were not fit to put to sea as a fleet, much less to fight. It was only a desperate courage that drove them on – and a mandatory order from Napoleon.

For their greatest misfortune was to be serving an Emperor who was a soldier, not a sailor. Napoleon did not understand the sea, but would never admit his ignorance. He had had to abandon his plans for invading England, and had been furious with his Navy, which he blamed for his failure. In his anger, he had ordered Villeneuve not only to put to sea from Cadiz on a useless voyage, but also to attack, whatever the odds against him. "His Majesty counts for nothing the loss of his ships," the orders had said, "provided they are lost with glory." And with that, he had put the Navy out of his mind and left for Austria to begin an army campaign which he enjoyed and understood – the campaign which led to his triumph at Austerlitz.

The approach to battle was a long ordeal in the feeble breeze. The French and Spanish tried to head back towards Cadiz, but scarcely moved at all; the British with all sail set bore down on them at about two knots. The ships were cleared for action in the usual six minutes, but six hours passed that morning before the fleets were in range.

Nobody had anything to do. Bands on the poops of several ships played cheerful tunes, and could clearly be heard in the ships that had no band. Down in the gloom of the gun-decks, men chalked defiant slogans on their guns, and sometimes leaned out of the gunports for a glimpse of the enemy. Boats rowed from ship to ship, and captains hailed each other and wished each other a prize in tow before the night. For to take a prize was always the ambition of every captain: if he could capture an enemy ship and tow it or sail it home, its value was divided between his admiral, himself and his crew. The captain's share could be a fortune, while the seaman's was only about enough to get drunk on: but everyone talked of prize-money before a fight and spent it in anticipation.

In the *Victory*, Nelson was surrounded by friends who knew him well – Captain Hardy, his two secretaries – both named Scott – the surgeon Dr. Beatty, Captain Blackwood of the frigates and many others. All of them were worried about his safety; for the *Victory*, leading the line, was sure to have a conspicuous part in the fight, and, in his uniform that glittered with decorations, he was the most conspicuous figure on his flagship's quarterdeck.

Blackwood tried to persuade him to move his flag to a frigate, or to let another ship lead the line; but Nelson only said

The two massive anchors on each side of the *Victory*'s towering bows were "weighed" or raised by hand-operated capstans with the help of a merry tune from the ship's fiddler.

it would set a bad example. He knew the danger too, and seemed to expect to die; but that was nothing new, he had always entered battle prepared for death, and danger merely made him happy and excited. During the morning, he wrote a codicil to his will, in which he commended Emma and Horatia to his country's care; and kneeling in his cabin, he wrote in his journal the prayer which resigned his own life to the mercy of God.

At 11.30 with the fleets a mile apart, Nelson called his Flag Lieutenant. "I will now amuse the fleet with a signal," he said with an air of boyish gaiety. "Suppose we telegraph 'Nelson confides that every man will do his duty.'" Other people suggested "England expects," because it was easier to signal, and at 11.35 the most famous battle signal ever made was hoisted to the yards and masthead of the *Victory*. It inspired generations of Englishmen, but it was not received with unanimous joy in the fleet. Nelson's first version would have pleased them better – for England seemed far away, but Nelson was with them the embodiment of their pride. Nelson's confidence would have meant more to them than England's expectation.

When the flags were hauled down, his last signal was hoisted: "Engage the enemy more closely." It flew at the masthead until it was shot away.

At 11.50 a burst of smoke was seen from the French ship *Fougueux*, and the sound of her guns came rolling across the sea. With a range of 1,000 yards, she had fired a full broadside at Collingwood's *Royal Sovereign*, leading the second line. Five other French and Spanish ships began to fire: the rest of the fleet watched the *Royal Sovereign* standing on towards the enemy line, unable yet to bring her own broadside to bear. She reached it, passed close under the stern of the Spanish flagship *Santa Ana*, firing all her port guns as she passed, and then hauled up alongside the Spaniard. Their rigging entangled and locked together, and to the watchers in the fleet both ships disappeared in the billowing cloud of their own gunsmoke.

The *Victory*'s ordeal came a few minutes later. One of the first shots that hit her

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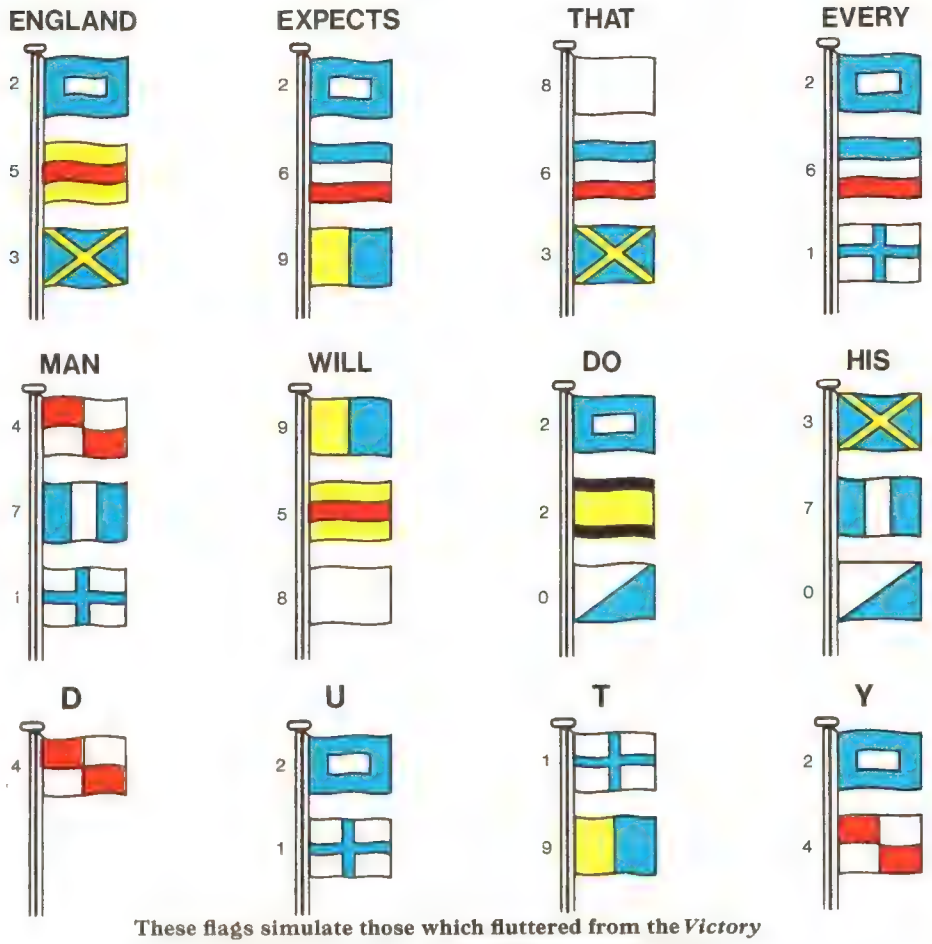
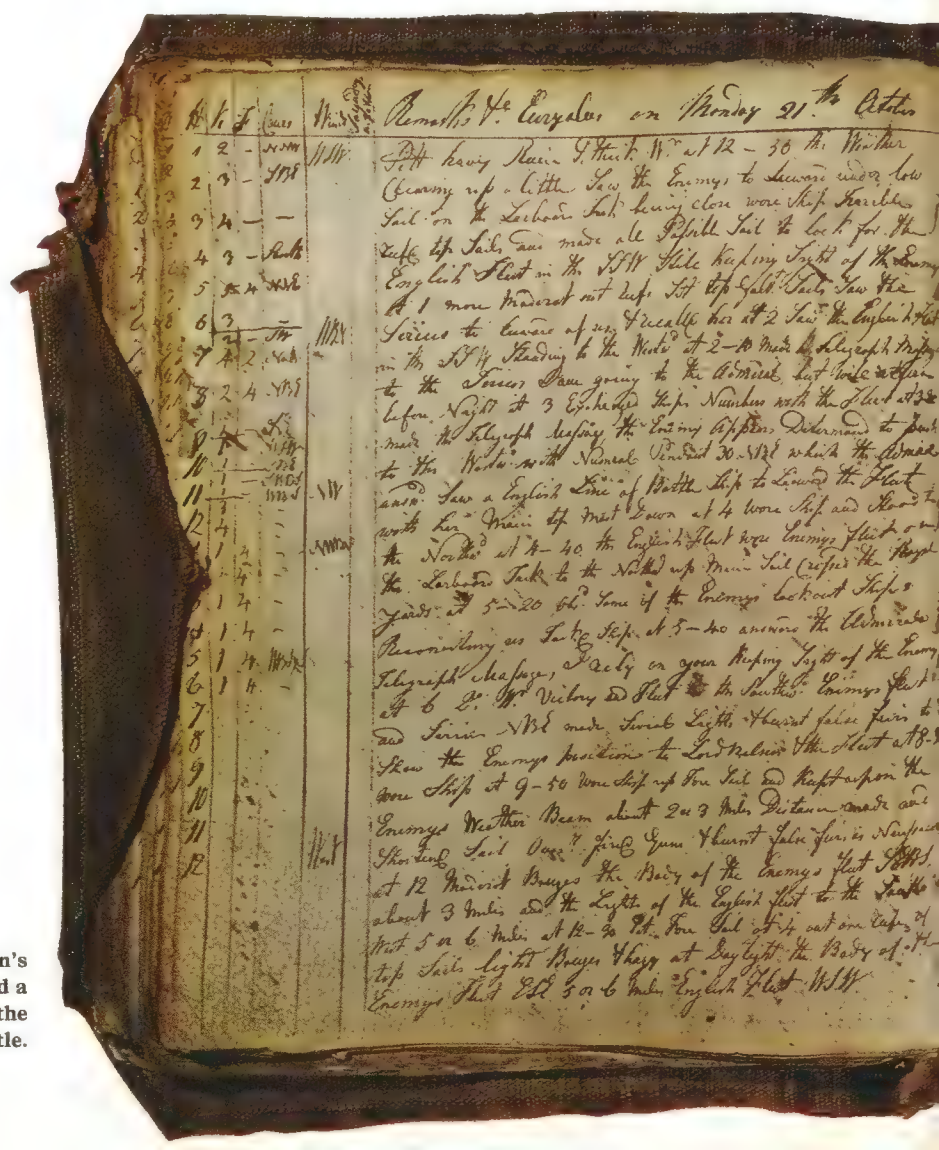
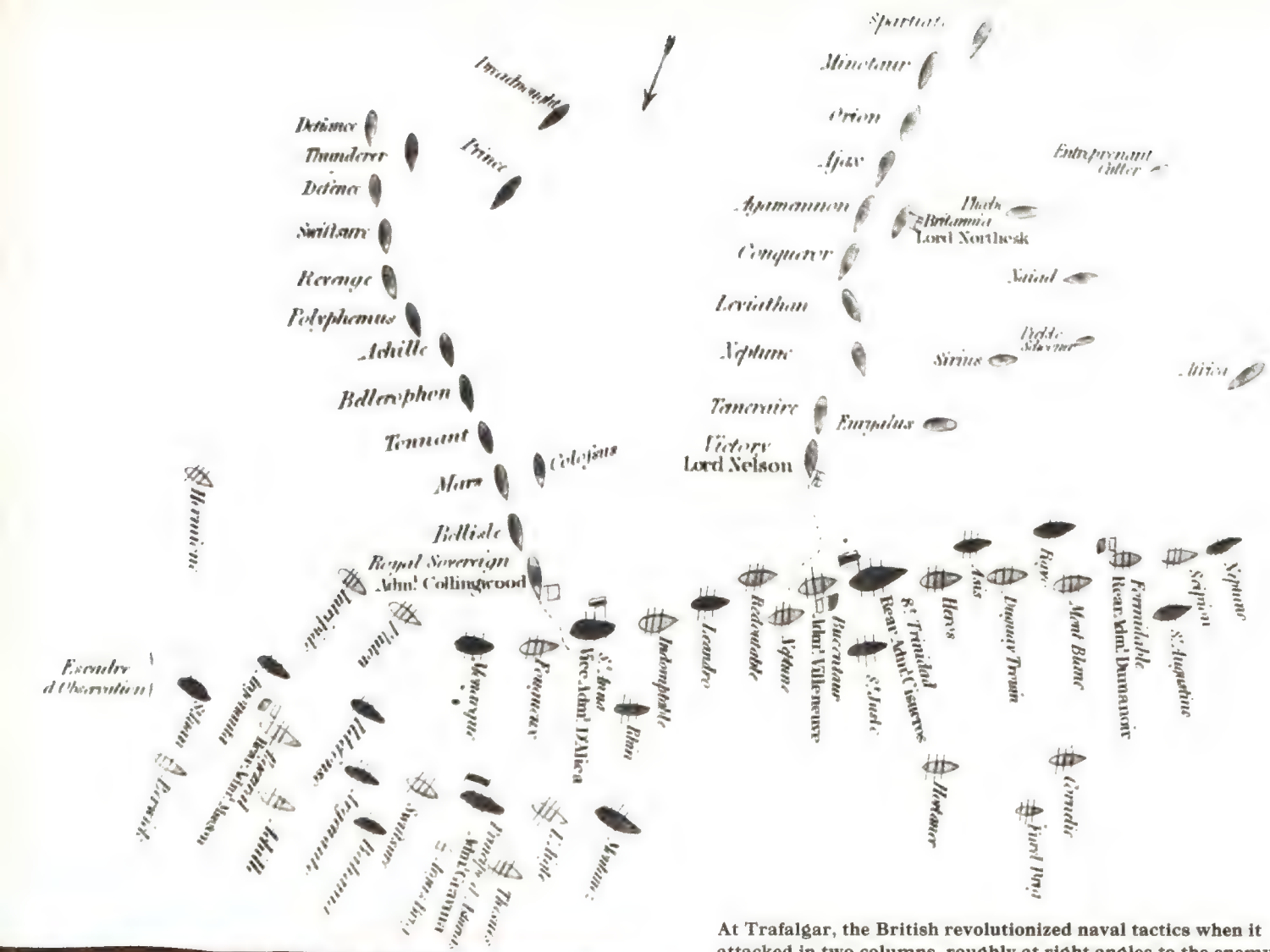


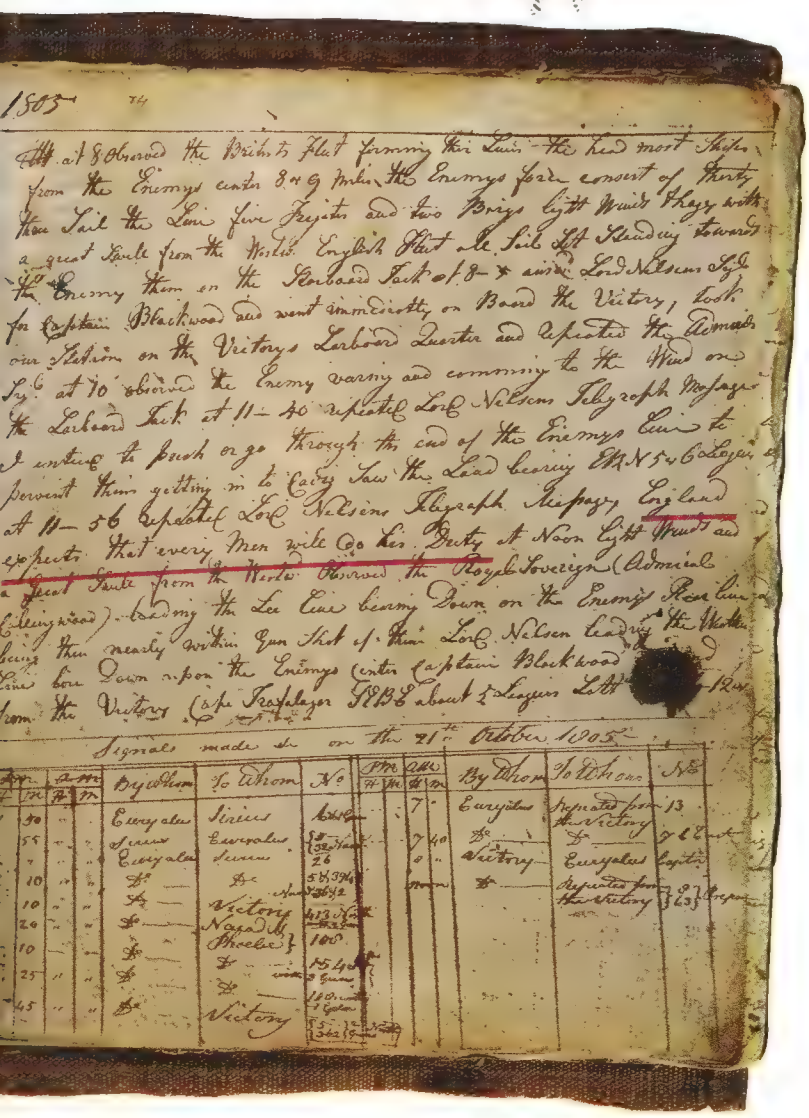
These flags simulate those which fluttered from the *Victory* before Trafalgar, signalling Nelson's message to the fleet.



The *Euryalus*' log records Nelson's celebrated signal to the British fleet amid a host of nautical details which conceal the tense drama of the final minutes before battle.



At Trafalgar, the British revolutionized naval tactics when it attacked in two columns, roughly at right angles to the enemy. In an age when ships had little or no fore and aft armament it was usual for them to sail into battle in parallel lines and batter each other with broadsides. This manœuvre took time, however, and as Nelson was impatient for a "pell-mell" battle he ordered Collingwood's column to pierce the Franco-Spanish line at the rear, while he used his own column to cut the line at the centre, effectively preventing the enemy's van from aiding its rear.



Nelson, flanked by his captains, explains his radical and daring tactical plan of battle which he named the "Nelson touch."

The *Victory* (right) was locked in a bloody duel with the French *Redoutable* (centre) throughout most of Trafalgar. While the *Victory* poured in broadside after broadside, the French ship countered with withering musket-fire from her deck and rigging; the casualties that the *Victory* took from small-arms fire did nothing to stop the English gunners wreaking havoc from the safety of their gun-decks. The approach of the British *Téméraire* (far left) sealed the *Redoutable*'s fate. Raked with shot from both sides she soon became a mastless hulk, filled with dead and dying.

killed one of Nelson's secretaries. Another passed between Nelson and Hardy, walking up and down, as custom demanded, on the quarter-deck. The steering-wheel was shattered, and the ship had to be steered by 40 men on the tiller, down on the lower gun-deck. But she also reached the enemy line, and cut through it astern of Villeneuve's ship, the *Bucentaure*, so close that with a gust of wind men could have seized the French ensign. At point-blank range she fired her port carronade, the largest of guns in the fleet, loaded with a 64-pound shot and a keg of 500 musket-balls, and then the whole of her broadside. From the *Bucentaure*, the dust of shattered woodwork drifted across her deck. Then the *Victory* rammed the French *Redoutable*, and the two ships were locked together. Close behind her the *Téméraire*, *Neptune* and *Leviathan* came through the gap Nelson had made.

Nelson had said he wanted to bring about "a pell-mell battle," and that was what happened. Nothing quite like it had been seen before, and nothing since. The formal lines of battle disappeared. In one square mile of sea, some 60 ships were moving independently, and each of them, all the time, was in range of several enemies. For the captains, it was like a deadly game, a mixture of luck and skill – skill in bringing one's own broadside to bear, while avoiding the enemy's; luck in the disposition of the clouds of smoke that often hid everything, so that ships, friend or foe, loomed through it at the range of a pistol-shot. Yet the game was played, as it were, in slow motion: probably, once battle was joined, no ship moved at more than one mile an hour, and to turn the great vessels took many minutes.

In this unique situation, the gunners blazed away at any enemy ship that crossed their line of sight, and they were seldom without a target. And all the firing was at very close range – a maximum perhaps of 100 or 200 yards, and a minimum of a foot or two. For many ships drove their bowsprits into an enemy's rigging and swung until their sides were grinding together. The *Victory* and the *Redoutable*, already entangled, drifted down on the *Téméraire*, and then all three fell aboard the French *Fougueux* – four ships side by side, all facing the same direction as if they were peacefully moored at a quay.

Below, on the gun-decks, such close encounters were hellish. A hell of noise: the concussion of guns that sometimes deafened men for life, the shouts and yells, occasionally cheers, of hundreds of men as they loaded, rammed and fired the rending crashes as enemy shot smashed through the wooden sides, and the screams of the wounded. A hell of vision too: through the blinding smoke, the dim squares of light from the nearest gun-ports, the flashes of fire, the surgeon's men heaving up the wounded who could not walk, men shoving their dead and dying companions through the ports and overboard into the sea; the powder-monkeys, small boys running through the horrors carrying cartridges, and the blood that slopped from side to side with the rolling of the ship.

Admiral Villeneuve – Nelson's adversary.

The *Victory*, under a huge Union Jack, plunges into the Franco-Spanish line, guns blazing, closely followed by the *Téméraire* (left) to begin the Battle of Trafalgar.

On the upper decks, the dangers were different – from musketry stray cannon-shot and falling masts and spars. Most men on deck and in the rigging were not there primarily to fight. Their job was to sail the ship – to make or shorten sail, to tack or wear on the captain's orders – and they carried on with their jobs and let the enemy, perhaps a few yards away, carry on with theirs. The British rather despised the use of muskets, which they correctly believed could never capture a ship; but some French captains had faith in them and stationed musketeers in the tops, 50 feet up their masts, to harass the enemy decks. And sometimes there was a shout for boarders or for men to repel boarders, and everyone snatched weapons stowed at the feet of the masts, and furious hand-to-hand fights flared up and died away and sometimes flared up again.

Captain Lucas of the *Redoutable*, alongside the *Victory*, was a brave and efficient man: stuck in harbour, he had been unable to train his crew in naval gunnery, but he had trained them instead in musketry, small-arms fighting and throwing grappling-irons and had promised them a chance to board an enemy. When the *Victory* rammed him, the British were amazed to see his crew slam shut their gun-ports and so cut off their main armament. But that was his plan. On his upper decks, he had hundreds of men with muskets, bayonets, cutlasses, pistols and hand-grenades.

If Nelson's friends could have foreseen that chance would bring them alongside a man with such ideas, their anxiety for his safety would have been despair. After close action had been joined, his work was done, and so was Hardy's. And therefore they did what they had always done when they had no pressing business; they paced up and down the quarter-deck together. Of course they could see the French musketeers: some of them were only 50 feet away. And they could see their own people falling round them, hit by Lucas's unprecedented fire. Perhaps they were both too absorbed in great

The *Victory*'s gun-decks at Trafalgar – vividly recalled in these waxwork reconstructions – were a bedlam. Cannon thundered, crashing back in recoil. Cursing gunners hauled on the tackle as acrid smoke, made hellish by the flash of cannon-fire, billowed round them.

Powder-monkeys, boys often as young as eight, scampered from magazines to guns carrying powder cartridges in leather cases.

events to think of immediate danger; but it was unthinkable that a commander-in-chief or a captain should take cover. Neither of them, in deference to the enemy, would have changed a single step of their ritual promenade.

It was after half an hour of battle that Nelson was shot and fell to the deck. "They have done for me at last," he said to Hardy. "My backbone is shot through." They carried him below. Nelson was laid in a little space on the orlop-deck, among 60 wounded men. In a few seconds Dr. Scott, the surviving secretary and Mr. Burke, the Purser were by his side. Whenever he could leave his groaning patients, Dr. Beatty, the surgeon came over to comfort his commander. Nelson knew he was dying. To Beatty, he described his symptoms precisely: he could scarcely breathe, his chest was intensely painful, below that his body was numb. To Scott he spoke about Lady Hamilton and Horatia, reminding him that he had left them to the care of his country. When Hardy came down to see him, he talked lucidly of the battle. "How goes the day with us?" "Very well, my Lord," replied Hardy, "we have got 12 or 13 of the enemy's ships in our possession." "That is well, but I bargained for 20," answered the dying Admiral.

He had always expected to die in battle. Now that the time had come, his thoughts seemed to move between the duty he had done, and the love and friendship he was relinquishing. "How dear life is to all men," he said with a tone of surprise. "Don't throw me overboard," he said to Hardy in a low voice. "You know what to do" – for they had often talked about his death. "Kiss me Hardy," he added as his life ebbed away. The Captain knelt and kissed his cheek. Nelson said, "Now I am satisfied", and closed his eyes. A little later, Hardy knelt again and kissed his forehead, expressing the feelings of everyone who was there. "Who is that?"

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THE TIMES

For 7th NOVEMBER. 1805

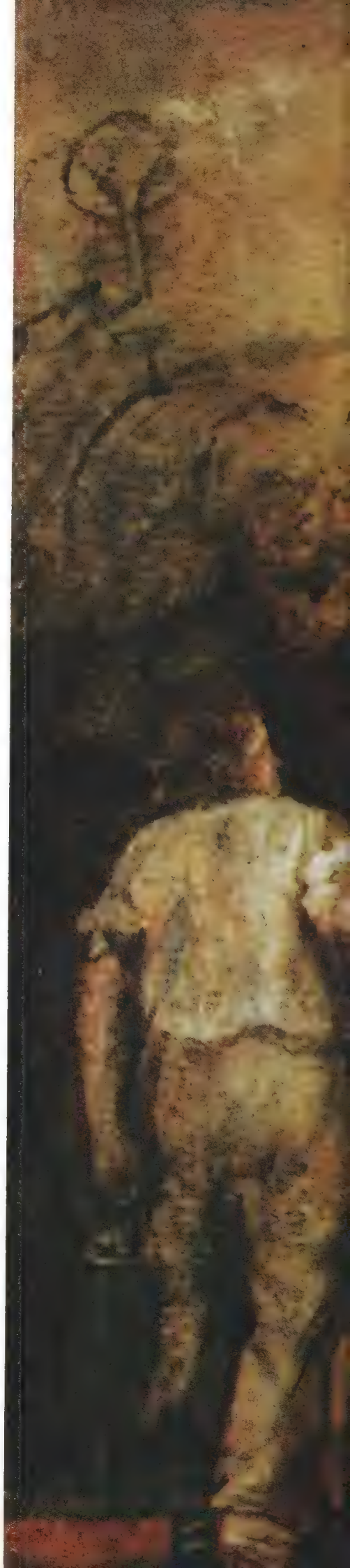
BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

CAPTURE OF FRENCH AND SPANISH FLEETS

DEATH OF NELSON

List of Killed and Wounded

A newsvendor's bill trumpets Nelson's victory at Trafalgar.



Nelson, mortally wounded by a French sharpshooter, is lifted gently from the deck by a marine and three sailors. Captain Hardy hovers anxiously at his left shoulder.

inquired Nelson. "It is Hardy", replied the Captain tenderly. "God bless you Hardy!" replied Nelson.

At last, as his breathing grew weaker he said to Scott, "Doctor I have not been a *great* sinner." And he reminded him again to care for Lady Hamilton and Horatia. Last of all, Scott heard him whisper distinctly, "Thank God I have done my duty." A few minutes later the pulse vanished from his wrists and sadly Dr. Beatty pronounced him dead.

All around, in the darkness of 50 orlop-decks, other men lay dying, each in his unapproachable solitude.

By that time, the difference in training between the two fleets had already begun to tell. After the years of blockade, the British were far better at ship-handling – and in gunnery, they could fire three times as fast as the French, and with better aim. In consequence, casualties in the French and Spanish ships were five or sometimes even ten times as many as in their British opponents. But as Nelson had said, masts and yards were carried away by shot on every side. The British *Belleisle*, which followed the *Royal Sovereign* into battle, soon lost all her masts. The *Mars*, which came behind her, was left with her masts still standing but every bit of her rigging shot away: she drifted through the battle unable to set a sail.

But here, the difference in determination showed. Most of the French and all the Spanish who were dismasted began at once to think of striking their colours in surrender. But it simply never crossed the minds of the British to do so. Some, by prodigious efforts in the heat of battle, got under way again with patched-together jury-rigs. Some got other ships to tow them, and fought on. Of all, perhaps the *Belleisle* showed the greatest coolness. When she could not move, and her gun-ports were masked by the sails and rigging that had fallen over her sides, her crew lashed a pike to the stump of a mast and flew her ensign from that, and they moved some guns and fired them from the stern-ports. Her Captain, in the midst of it all, was seen to be standing on deck and eating a bunch of grapes. "The ship is doing nobly," he said to the Captain of Marines, and offered him some grapes – and then sent him in a boat to accept the surrender of a Spaniard.

It was this that made Trafalgar a total victory: first Nelson's tactical plan, and then the total, unquestioning confidence he had inspired. While he lay dying, down in the dark cockpit of the *Victory* among the other wounded, 19 enemy ships hauled down their flags. By four o'clock, it was all over. An unknown hand wrote with a pencil in the *Victory*'s log: "Partial firing continued until 4.30, when a victory having been reported to the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Nelson, K.B., and Commander-in-Chief, he died of his wound."

"On such terms, it was a victory I never wished to have witnessed." So Captain Blackwood wrote to his wife that night; and as the news of Nelson's death spread slowly through the fleet, men of all ranks expressed the same feeling: the elation of victory vanished in genuine sorrow, for the commander they had lost seemed to them more important than the battle they had won.

In a day when destruction and death had been commonplace, it was the odd little incidents that people talked about. Of events in the battle, what stuck most firmly in their minds was the occasional strange behaviour of wounded men. They were used to gunnery, and to sailing in difficult circumstances, and those who had never been shot at before had found, as most people do, that they were not so cowardly as they had feared. "When they had given us one duster," a sailor wrote, "and I found myself snug and tight, I bid fear kiss my bottom, and set to in good earnest."

But none of them had seen the effects of wounds and shock on such a scale. They

Boarding-parties sprang on to an enemy's deck whenever ships locked together. The outcome of hand-to-hand fighting like this often determined a ship's fate.

As ships going into battle shuddered under the first rounds of enemy fire, deck-crews cleared away shattered spars and tangled rigging to keep the vessels in sailing trim.

told of a man who had his arm smashed and walked down to the cockpit and sang "Rule Britannia" all through the amputation. In the *Bellerophon*, Lieutenant Cumby met a messmate waiting for the surgeon, and said he was sorry to see him wounded. "'Tis only a mere scratch," the officer replied, "and I shall have to apologize to you by and by for leaving the deck on so trifling an occasion." He was waiting, it turned out, to have his right arm amputated. In the *Revenge*, the ship's cobbler, a merry man and a celebrated dancer, was serving a gun when a shot came in at the port and killed the crew. Men bundled the corpses out of the port. But when the cobbler was half-way out, he began to kick, and they hauled him back in time. "A good thing I showed you some dance steps," he said soon after, without the least ill-will, "otherwise I would have been snug in Davy Jones's locker." In the *Tonnant*, there was a more macabre story: a man who had had his leg taken off by the surgeon heard some cheering from the gun-deck up above, and joined in and cheered so loudly that he burst the ligatures and died of the consequent haemorrhage.

Telling each other stories like these – proud of success, grieving over friends, glad to be alive, counting the prize-money and planning how they would spend it – they were all perhaps more shaken and weary than they knew. Work went slowly. As the evening advanced they began in an almost leisurely way to repair their own damage, and take in tow the ships that could not be repaired, and the prizes they had won.

The next day, depressed by Nelson's death and exhausted by battle, they were faced by a worse ordeal: a storm which blew straight on to the enemy coast.

Many veterans had never seen such a wind and sea as they saw the week after Trafalgar. And no sailing fleet in history was ever in such a perilous position: nearly 50 ships on a lee shore, including the prizes, about half of them dismasted, and each with scores, and some with hundreds of wounded and dying men down on their orlop-decks. At first, the British tried to tow the crippled ships away from the coast. Waves swept the decks, guns broke adrift, men worked aloft by day and night on swaying masts supported by rigging already weakened and hastily knotted or spliced. Skilled seamanship was stretched to its limit. Both fleets were united against this common danger: men who had fought each other struggled now to save each other's lives. But after three days, it became impossible. Collingwood signalled the fleet to abandon the prizes, take the men out of them and sink them or let them drive ashore.

So a new struggle began: to drag the wounded up from the orlop-decks of the French and Spanish ships, lower them into heaving boats and row them to British ships that were under control. Many hundreds were saved; many men lost their lives in trying to save them; but many hundreds still lay helpless below and were drowned when their ships went down or were pounded to wreckage on the shoals and rocks.

Not one of the British ships was lost, and that was a great achievement of great seamen. But only four of the prizes could be saved – and that to the fleet, was a bitter disappointment which took the glory out of the victory. The prize-money they had fairly won was gone, they felt they had nothing to show for their success. One by one, in the following fortnight, the ships limped into Gibraltar, to seek repairs for the voyage back to England. Their crews were dead weary: already, the battle seemed long ago.

Memories of a Hero

News of Nelson's death reached London in the early hours of November 6, 1805, and the Navy's grief was soon shared by much of the country. As the foggy day drew to a close, black cockades with "Nelson" printed across them appeared for sale in the London streets and by the time he was laid to rest in St. Paul's Cathedral two months later, factories and workshops had churned out a whole range of commemorative items like those on these pages, variously emblazoned with Nelson, the *Victory* and Trafalgar.

Favourite targets for embellishment were the china patch-boxes in which fashionable ladies kept the little velvet spots they delighted in gumming to their faces and bosoms. Many of the souvenirs, like rings, brooches and lockets were elegant and costly, but others, like the crude pottery figures, were cheap enough to be bought by the poor who were as eager as the rich to remember Nelson.

A fan inscribed with patriotic doggerel and dedicated to Lady Collingwood, the wife of Nelson's Second-in-Command at Trafalgar, bears a portrait of Nelson and pictures of a number of his ships in action.

Water-pitchers were among the hundreds of everyday objects embossed with Nelson's effigy and widely sold after his tragic death.

Patch-boxes were adorned with Nelson's flagship (above) and a dramatized scene of the Battle of the Nile (below).

Gaudy figurines of Nelson were sold in their thousands after Trafalgar.

Nelson cameo brooches, such as this one encircled with a ring of pearls, were prized by fashionable ladies.

This lover's locket, which holds a twist of hair, bears Nelson's monogram.

A cameo ring depicts a rather tired and careworn Nelson, whose hair falls about his ears and whose nose is considerably exaggerated.

Patch-boxes lamented Nelson's tragic death (above) and commemorated Trafalgar (below).

The elongated figure of Nelson forms the handle of a stopper, used to ram down tobacco in a pipe.

Crude pottery groups sold for a few pence.

IV. "Remember Nelson!"

Nelson's victory, the four hours' fight on that October afternoon, established a supremacy at sea which lasted nearly a century and half, right through the Age of Steam, until the economic effects of the two world wars made Britain unable to keep a world-wide Navy. And that continuous sea supremacy was the essential, stable basis of the British Empire in the 19th Century.

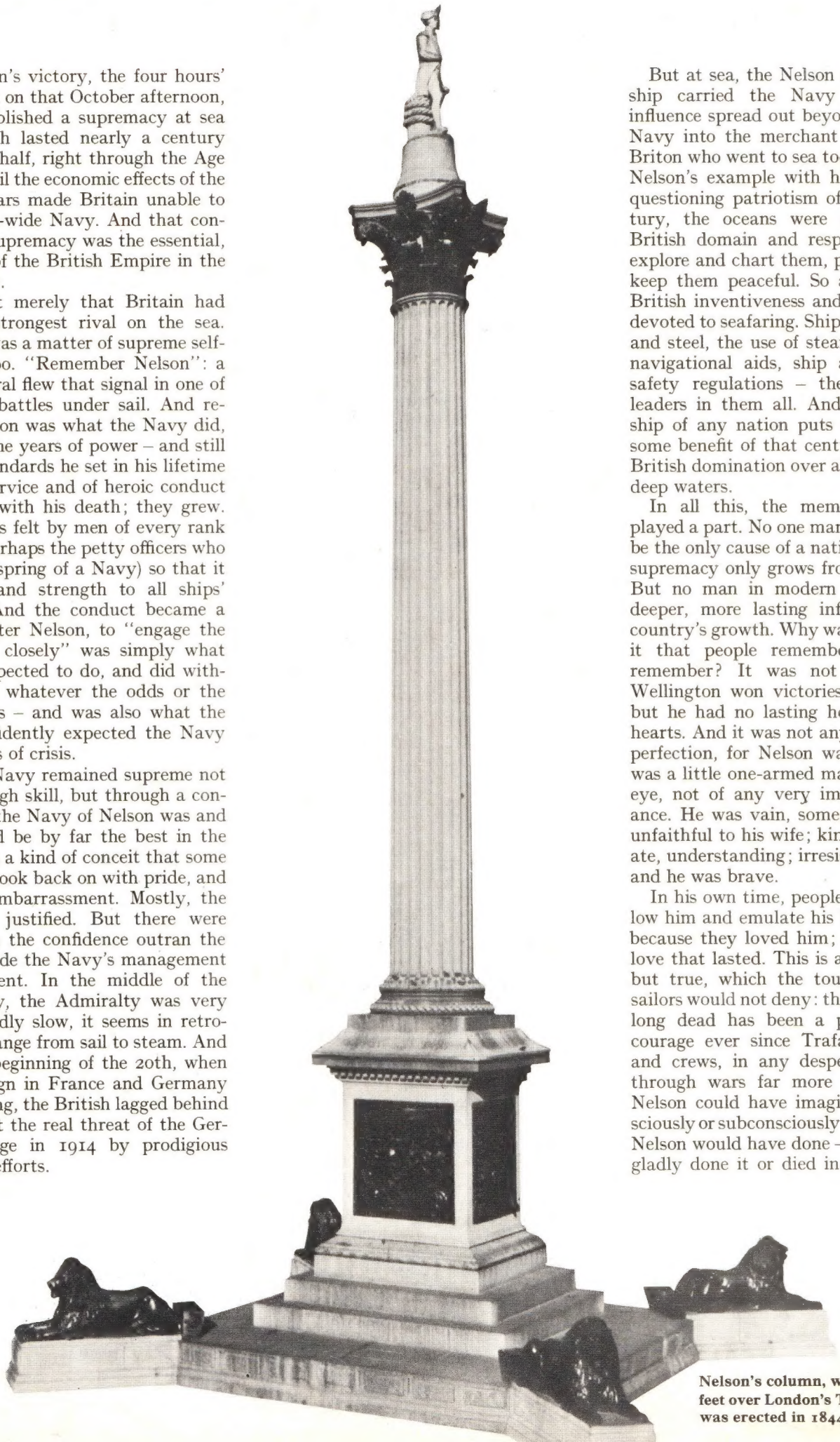
It was not merely that Britain had beaten her strongest rival on the sea. Supremacy was a matter of supreme self-confidence too. "Remember Nelson": a British admiral flew that signal in one of the last sea battles under sail. And remember Nelson was what the Navy did, all through the years of power – and still does. The standards he set in his lifetime of pride in service and of heroic conduct did not end with his death; they grew. The pride was felt by men of every rank (especially perhaps the petty officers who are the mainspring of a Navy) so that it gave unity and strength to all ships' companies. And the conduct became a tradition. After Nelson, to "engage the enemy more closely" was simply what the Navy expected to do, and did without question whatever the odds or the circumstances – and was also what the country confidently expected the Navy to do in times of crisis.

Thus the Navy remained supreme not merely through skill, but through a conviction that the Navy of Nelson was and always would be by far the best in the world. It was a kind of conceit that some Britons still look back on with pride, and some with embarrassment. Mostly, the conceit was justified. But there were periods when the confidence outran the skill, and made the Navy's management too complacent. In the middle of the 19th Century, the Admiralty was very slow – absurdly slow, it seems in retrospect – to change from sail to steam. And around the beginning of the 20th, when warship design in France and Germany was advancing, the British lagged behind and only met the real threat of the German challenge in 1914 by prodigious last-minute efforts.

But at sea, the Nelson style of leadership carried the Navy through. His influence spread out beyond the fighting Navy into the merchant service: every Briton who went to sea took a little bit of Nelson's example with him. In the unquestioning patriotism of the 19th Century, the oceans were accepted as a British domain and responsibility – to explore and chart them, police them and keep them peaceful. So a large part of British inventiveness and ingenuity was devoted to seafaring. Shipbuilding in iron and steel, the use of steam, the turbine, navigational aids, ship administration, safety regulations – the British were leaders in them all. And even now, no ship of any nation puts to sea without some benefit of that century of absolute British domination over all of the world's deep waters.

In all this, the memory of Nelson played a part. No one man, of course, can be the only cause of a nation's evolution: supremacy only grows from many roots. But no man in modern history had a deeper, more lasting influence on any country's growth. Why was it? What was it that people remembered, and still remember? It was not only success: Wellington won victories as important, but he had no lasting hold on people's hearts. And it was not any kind of moral perfection, for Nelson was no saint. He was a little one-armed man, blind in one eye, not of any very imposing appearance. He was vain, sometimes irritable; unfaithful to his wife; kind, compassionate, understanding; irresistibly lovable – and he was brave.

In his own time, people wanted to follow him and emulate his bravery simply because they loved him; and it was the love that lasted. This is a strange thing, but true, which the toughest of naval sailors would not deny: that love of a man long dead has been a prime cause of courage ever since Trafalgar. Captains and crews, in any desperate situation, through wars far more ferocious than Nelson could have imagined, have consciously or subconsciously wondered what Nelson would have done – and then have gladly done it or died in the attempt.



Nelson's column, which towers 167 feet over London's Trafalgar Square, was erected in 1844 in his memory.

Enjoy your 'imperial pint' from this burnished pewter tankard.

Only £3.30–save £1.95.

Pewter drinking vessels have a long and ancient history. They may even have originated in Britain – in Roman times – since supplies of tin and lead were plentiful.

The earliest surviving English pewter tankards date from about 1650. Like that offered here, they have flat lids, though whether for hygiene, security or simply to make more work for the influential guild of craftsmen is not really known.

Traditional Design

Lids became less popular after about 1690, and went out of use altogether about 1830. By this time the original tin and lead mixture from which pewter had for centuries been made had been replaced by an alloy of tin and antimony.

The pewter tankard offered to you here combines the best of both worlds. Its traditional design is based on 17th century lidded tankards, while the metal is a completely lead-free alloy.

Monogrammed

The tankard holds an imperial pint, and stands over 6″ high. It is offered at the advantageous price of only £3.30, instead of £5.25 (manufacturer's recommended retail price), a saving of £1.95. For 50p any two initials of your choice will be scroll engraved, as illustrated.

A 'pint' could never taste better than it does from this handsome hand made tankard, with its silky smooth, burnished finish. Imagine it displayed in your home, or the pleasure with which it would be received as a gift or trophy.

To order your imperial pint tankard in three weeks' time, you'll need four gold tokens from *The Britis Empire*. Start saving them now – the first token appears this week.

Once you had to be rich to drink from goblets like these!

Now this pair can be yours for only £1.95.

You'd have to pay around £4.25 in the shops for a pair of goblets of this quality. As a regular reader of *The British Empire*, you can own them for under half price—only £1.95 and 4 purple tokens. That's a saving of £2.30.

Shaped and polished by hand

Each goblet is handmade from an exclusive design. First the bowl is shaped in strong, smooth nickel silver. The solid brass stem is then added, and the complete goblet hard-plated with silver. Finally it is polished to gleaming perfection, again by hand.

Years of pleasure

People who could afford them have drunk from silver vessels for centuries. One advantage is that, unlike precious crystal glasses, these goblets will never get chipped or cracked. Being silver-plated to the highest standards of quality, they will give you pleasure for years, both in use and on display in your home.

Limited supply

Each goblet, approximately 4¼″ tall, is a full sherry glass size. Only 750 pairs will be available.

At the incredibly low price of £1.95 a pair, the demand is expected to be far greater than the supply. Make sure you are ready to place your order by collecting the four purple tokens you'll need to send with it. The third token appears this week. Because of the expected demand, it is necessary to limit orders to 2 pairs per order.

How the token scheme works

Each week, there are two tokens on the inside front cover of *The British Empire*. This week, there's the first gold tankard token and the third purple goblets token. Each week, you should collect these tokens to take advantage of the exciting offers that are on their way. And every week, as you collect towards the current offer, you'll be getting a start towards the next.

Note:

If you miss a token, your newsageht will be able to order the appropriate back number of *The British Empire* for you.

All offers applicable to the British Isles only.

Jacobean English Lady, 1616